

important documents for further information. While this listing is by no means comprehensive, it will give those interested a starting point into the rich area of research and discussion in the field of information science.

NCDC is a working group constituted at each new edition of the *NCDC Implementation Guidelines* that oversees the establishment of Dublin Core standards for the NC ECHO project. The working group consists of metadata specialists from throughout North Carolina's cultural heritage institutions and is facilitated by the NC ECHO Metadata Coordinator. It is the aim of the group to provide a broad interpretation of the Dublin Core standard and to devise best practices for implementation in North Carolina. This interpretation is intended to be flexible enough for the wide variety of uses that Dublin Core has but provide enough guidance to ensure that quality metadata is created by institutions using the standard. For more information about the working group structure, please see <http://www.ncecho.org/ncdc/ncdcworkinggroup.htm>.

What is Metadata?

Metadata is informally defined as "information about information" or any data associated with a resource that describes that particular resource. A more general definition that is useful for us is "structured information about any information resource of any media type or format."¹ In this context, an information object is anything that can be addressed and manipulated by a human or a system as a discrete entity. The essential aspect of the metadata system, then, is the structured format for that information. Metadata itself is essentially a modern term for the bibliographic information that libraries traditionally entered into their catalogs or registry information on collections that museums have entered into their systems; however, the term *metadata* is most commonly used to refer to descriptive information about World Wide Web resources.

The creation of metadata for digital resources is an important part of a digitization project, and must be incorporated into a project's workflow. Metadata should be created and associated with the digital resource to support the discovery, use, management, reusability, and sustainability of the resources. Metadata is most often divided into three conceptual types (with some overlap among the three):

Descriptive metadata: information used for the indexing, discovery, and identification of a digital resource. Descriptive metadata includes information about subject and context of the resource being described. Referred to as "analytical metadata," this description requires analysis of the resource being described. Analytical metadata terms can include personal and family names, corporate bodies, topical terms, geographical places, temporal periods, genre formats, etc.

Structural metadata: information used to display and navigate digital resources; also includes information on the internal organization of the digital resource. Structural metadata might include information such as the structural divisions of a resource (i.e., chapters in a book) or sub-object relationships (such as individual diary entries in a diary section).

Administrative metadata: information needed for the management of the digital object, which includes information regarding access and display and rights management. Administrative metadata also includes information on the creation of the digital object in order to ensure long-term sustainability. This is called *preservation metadata*. Fields include

¹ Pricilla Caplan, *Metadata Fundamentals for All Librarians*, (Chicago: American Library Association, 2003), p. 3.